The framing of decision situations

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3 The organization of goal-oriented knowledge

> *"In well-developed belief systems about the world, there are many expectations about likely events. These expectations are based on detailed knowledge of the genesis and nature of particular goals. Since such expectations are crucial to understanding, we need to know how to recognize when a goal exists for an actor and how to predict his future actions from that goal. Most importantly, we need to know how to recognize when a goal exists for an actor and how to predict (and thus understand) his future actions from that goal."*
>
> ROGER C. SCHANK & ROBERT P. ABELSON (1977)

In the preceding chapters, it was made clear that the *situational identification of purpose* is the key element of framing theory. Given the purpose, it was argued, action comes about by a telltale decision rule – and this way, the observed action allows to make inferences about the goal which the actor tried to attain. Inherent on the outset of such an approach is the danger of arbitrariness. Without guidelines for which goals do and which do not qualify for being pursued in a given decision situation, also idiosyncratic behaviour can be rationalized post-hoc by arguing that researchers might just not have predicted correctly what the actor's true motivations were. Behavioural analysis would remain within a post-hoc framework of little, if any, predictive power. While this can stimulate further theory development, it definitely is a weakness of the explanatory model *ante* factum. Adding to this the danger of including too much detail on the cognitive side of the model, one faces a trap of non-applicability which seemingly a lot of earlier research about the definition of the situation got caught in (see the summary on pp.13f above). In order to prevent the same happening to framing theory, strong theoretical guidelines for the proposed situational identification of purpose are necessary (*"there is nothing as practical as a good theory"* – LEWIN 1951). The function of the present chapter is that of providing a link to the research disciplines from which these guidelines will be motivated.

It will be argued that a considerably large group of goals is socially determined, and that this group in particular includes those goals that play a role in public life – as expressed in the quote from SCHANK & ABELSON (1977, p.102) on the previous page. For this aim, a selection of research results is presented that refer to goal-oriented social knowledge as either functionally interrelated in a goal hierarchy which reflects the social position of an actor (Section **3.1**), as constructs in human memory that reflect the actor's knowledge of his social environment (Section **3.2**), or in terms of morphological similarity (Section **3.3**). The three perspectives complement each other and together deliver the theoretical guidelines that shall safeguard framing theory against being but a post-hoc explanatory framework without predictive power. They do so by providing a basis for a systematic, theory-driven construction of the goal set (the set of goals that can be expected to be pursued by a given actor in a given decision situation – see Section **4.1**), and by allowing for a systematic, theory-driven formulation of behavioural hypotheses that result from situational goal identification (and as such are the ingenious contribution of framing theory to behavioural analysis – see Section **4.2**).

3.1 The functional architecture of goals

Because the identification of a situational goal is a crucial component of framing theory, a theory which helps spelling out the goals that figure in a particular decision maker's menu would be highly desirable. With such a guideline, the degree of post-hoc rationalizing of actors' behaviour by adding or adapting goals in the explanatory framework can be controlled. As the following three problems shall illustrate, such a theory of goals should be more than a mere listing[43] of personally available goals, it should also be able to explain the interrelatedness of these goals (their *integration*, in LOCKE & LATHAM's terminology). A hierarchical structuring of goals in a personal goal hierarchy is the natural way to meet this requirement. The first problems are as follows:

Rejection of assigned goals. The first point concerns the fact that externally suggested goals are not necessarily accepted by decision makers. For instance, ethical concerns can make people reject an externally suggested type of reasoning and acting (HUYS ET AL. 1990).

When TAYLOR (1911) worked out his ideas on scientific management, he already solved this type of problem by explaining task compliance with the *satisfaction* which accompanies goal achievement – and which can be severely impaired due to side effects of the decision that were not captured in the assigned goal in the first place. A preliminarily conclusion here is that goals only 'work' if they are readily linked to such a universal motivational dimension called *satisfaction* by TAYLOR – and that theory must be provided to account for such links.

Embeddedness of decisions in plans. A second aspect of situational goal identification which framing theory should be able to address arises from the embedding of the goal in the actor's personal plans. When a goal has been reached, subsequent actions may differ fundamentally between actors, while previous ones did not.

Politicians may serve as an illustration here: after they are elected, some of them do try to enact their election pledges while others clearly do not (THOMSON 1999). Seemingly, these political styles differ in the preferred interpretation of their party programme: whether the mandate is instrumental to achieving the programme's goals, or whether the programme is instrumental to getting the mandate. A theory of goals should also be able to account for such instrumentality links between decisions.

Opportunity matching. The related third point is that actors differ considerably in their actions when faced with situations where they cannot reach a given goal. They may engage in activities with the aim of reaching the goal at a later moment (develop new abilities,

[43] For a more thorough critique of such goal lists than the one provided below, refer to VAN BRUGGEN (2001) or ORMEL ET AL. (1999).

search for new alternatives), but they may also abandon the goal and pursue a completely different one.

While controlled planning is not the topic of this book, the situational replacement of goals stands central to it. Therefore, it will be necessary to control for conditions under which either controlled planning or simple replacement of the goal will occur. If the goal is an important one, actors may postpone goal attainment and in-between actively try to improve conditions for pursuing the goal – they thus create new, subordinate decision situations on their own by active planning. If, on the other hand, the environmental distraction is strong enough, or the goal itself is not so important, then the goal may simply be abandoned for good. It is this latter case only which is addressed by framing theory.

The three effects can be accounted for in sufficient detail with the notion of a *goal hierarchy*. At the top of such a hierarchy, a common supergoal is found which corresponds to TAYLOR's notion of satisfaction, and which here will be called – in line with language use in quality of life literature – *subjective well-being* (e.g., DIENER ET AL. 1999). To this goal, all others are related in a hierarchical manner via chains of instrumentality relations. The embeddedness of decisions in plans as well as the relative importance of goals can be modelled naturally in such a framework. Trying to assess an actor's goals and then order these in a goal hierarchy is obviously a difficult task which needs further systematic guidance – but which is not topic of this book. In Section **3.1.2**, the approach of *social production function theory* (LINDENBERG) will be chosen as the – for the present purpose – most convenient way of structuring personal goals.

The major lesson from this Section **3.1** shall be that goals which are potential competitors for being pursued in a decision situation inherit some important properties from the hierarchy they are embedded in (nestedness, mutual inhibition or support, 'instrumental distance'). The role which situational aspects play in activating these goals (e.g. the 'opportunity matching' mentioned above) must be understood as acting on the structural framework of the goal hierarchy introduced here.

3.1.1 From universal motivators to situation-specific goals

In order to account for the instrumental relationships that exist between different goals and at the same time impose some structure on the large set of theoretically possible goals, it is advisable to start with a search for universally shared goals. NUTTIN (1980) in this context proposed that *"a subject's motivational direction toward a specific object should be conceived as the concretization or canalization of a more general need"* (p.67), while SCHANK & ABELSON (1977) argue that, vice-versa, *"knowledge of someone's goals comes often from knowledge of universal motivations and knowledge of the usual functions of objects and places"* (p.108). After a cursory review of theories

about universal motivators, goal hierarchies will be introduced as an elegant as well as useful way of translating these universal motivators into situationally operant goals. LINDENBERG's hierarchy of *social production functions* will finally be singled out as the framework that lends itself most easily for the purpose of identifying those goals in a decision maker's menu which are likely to play a role in a given decision situation.

Needs and first order goals

With long tradition in psychology, the ultimate and universal sources of an actor's motoric activity have been addressed in theories about *needs* and *drives*. Leaving aside the (for the present purpose) subtle difference between the two concepts, the general idea is that they are common to every member of the human species – they are *"ontological facts of life"* (KAMENETZKY 1992), and as such they are *"the same in all cultures and in all historical periods. What changes, both over time and through cultures, is the way or the means by which needs are satisfied"* (MAX-NEEF 1986/9). Taking up an analogy from computer science, one might say that needs are 'hardwired', while e.g. work goals (like 'increase sales by 10%') are 'softwired' in the sense that they are open to manipulation, and thus will differ between persons.

There were various endeavours to categorize human needs in a universal system, an early source of inspiration surely being FREUD's idea that all human action results from the interplay of the two instincts sex and aggression (modified later to the life and death instincts). The first more systematic inventory of needs was presented by MCDOUGALL (1932) who proposed 18 human needs, defining them in terms of basic behavioural patterns which satisfy them (e.g., *'11: to cry aloud for assistance when our efforts are utterly baffled'*). However, *"this listing lacks a theoretical perspective on the relationships between the various needs"* (JAGER ET AL. 1997, p.19) and as such is unsuited for explaining more complex behaviour patterns. The classical elaboration of needs theory by MURRAY (1938) and his team takes a much more systematic approach, distinguishing the 'innate propensity' that today commonly is associated with the word from the behavioural pattern performed to satisfy the need: *"it should be clear that the term 'need' or 'drive' does not denote an observable fact - the direction of activity for example... It refers to a hypothetical process within the brain... If opposed by another need process, it may not manifest itself overtly"* (p.72f). Another innovation of MURRAY's which is useful in the present context is the explicit admission of instrumentality relations between motivations. However, MURRAY called all motivations 'needs', whether they are universal or contingent on the environment. It is here where one of the important contributions of MASLOW's (1954) lies: he reduced MURRAY's abundance to seven basic need dimensions. Further, he introduced the idea of varying *degrees of need satisfaction* – a perspective that was notably absent in the earlier systems, where a need satisfaction was a yes-or-no issue. MASLOW proposes to order needs hierarchically, in a manner that makes higher-order need satisfaction contingent on a minimum degree of satisfaction of the more basic needs[44].

[44] Or, in BRECHT's words, *"erst kommt das Fressen, dann die Moral"* (1928).

More recently, need systems were suggested by DOYAL & GOUGH (1991), KAMENETZKY (1992), or MAX-NEEF (1986/9) – with little chances that this list is complete (see ORMEL ET AL. 1999 for a more thorough review). The common aim of all these modern need theories is 'human scale development' or, synonymously, the measurement of social welfare, or quality of life. The approaches can be understood best against the background of the old debate whether the macroeconomic quantity 'gross national product' is an adequate indicator for a country's welfare, and the lack of convincing alternative measures. Despite the differences between these theories in classification, emphasis and approach, there is a general consent that needs are universal, they are finite, few and classifiable. The different propositions of need taxonomies *"can perhaps best be regarded as facets of the same reality. The difficulty is not in choosing between these, but in making any reasonably complex formulation of human needs relevant to economic decision making"* (KAMENETZKY 1992, p.196). Keeping in mind this relative arbitrariness of taxonomies, the further elaboration of framing theory will follow LINDENBERG's (1989, 1996a) model of a *social production function* hierarchy, which will be sketched in the following section. Unlike the needs systems mentioned, his system (as well as the one suggested by DE VOS 1998) explicitly includes the assumption that needs translate via a goal hierarchy into behavioural goals – which renders the model a straightforward first choice for structuring goals and instrumentality relations at the same time.

Re-reading now SCHANK & ABELSON's (1977) introductory quote about intentions inferred from behaviour: *"knowledge of someone's goals comes often from knowledge of universal motivations and knowledge of the usual functions of objects and places"* – the word 'usual' points to the role which the social dimension plays for identifying the goals which an actor pursues. In a similar vein, NUTTIN (1980) writes: *"Although some general motivational orientations are innate and, as such, common to all human beings, their behavioral shaping occurs as a function of situational factors and cognitive processing (personal goal setting and planning). Therefore, not the same behavioral manifestations of needs are present in all people. Only a few meaningful orientations can be abstracted and inferred from different actions that people perform in the context of different cultures and situations"* (p.79). Any formal structuring of human motivations thus should be interpreted as the result of such an abstraction-and-inference process. A taxonomy which explicitly takes into account the cultural, social and situational specificity of human motivations will be sketched now.

3.1.2 LINDENBERG's social production functions

As suggested by the KAMENETZKY quote above, the major problem of need theories is that they have difficulty coming up with a convincing alternative to the microeconomic model of man as a rational utility maximizer. The big advantage of the utility notion over needs is that it allows to translate different objects' worth into a common scale value '*utility*', and thus "compare apples and oranges." Need systems usually (mostly implicitly) assume that no substitution across needs is possible. A consequence of this assumption is that the theories'

behavioural predictions thereby become contingent on the precise list of needs which the model includes, and in many instances cannot predict behaviour at all, namely when different need dimensions suggest incompatible behaviour (e.g., eat the cake and keep it). A classical needs-based model of human motivation thus is a bad alternative to the utility model, which solves the conflict between need dimensions by a simple tradeoff between the two conflicting desires. A fruitful combination of the utility model and needs-based models of motivation will be presented now.

Utility theory and situation-sensitive motivations

> *"Social differentiation generates distinct interests among those variously located in the structure of the society."*
> ROBERT K. MERTON (1957)

In microeconomic theory, it were STIGLER & BECKER (1977) who introduced the distinction between *universal* preferences (goals) which are shared by all human beings, and *instrumental* goals which are pursued as means to produce attainment of these universal goals. The resulting theory of *household production functions* was extended by LINDENBERG to his theory of *social production functions* (e.g. LINDENBERG 1989). In contrast to STIGLER & BECKER, who deliberately leave the nature of the universal goals unspecified, LINDENBERG tentatively identifies these as physical well-being (with the two instrumental first-order goals *stimulation* and *comfort*) and social well-being (with the three instrumental first-order goals *status, behavioural confirmation,* and *affection*). What is important in this context is not the specific choice of these five first-order goals (or need dimensions) but the idea that goals *"are hierarchically structured, with the general human goals on top and with lower level goals being structurally explained"* (LINDENBERG & FREY 1993, p.196). Following LINDENBERG & FREY, these lower level goals entirely depend on the opportunities and restrictions an actor faces. They *"are not subjective or idiosyncratic but they are social facts in DURKHEIM's sense of the word"* (ibid. – see DURKHEIM's definition of "social facts" on p.71). The factuality of social production functions can be illustrated with the differences between genders in producing first-order goal attainment:

> *"...in our society, it is still true that by and large women can produce income by either working or by being tied to a male partner (for making a home), and women can produce social approval either by their own occupational status or by being tied to a male partner (they get behavioural confirmation for making a home and raising children and they participate in the occupational status of their partner). For men, the situation is different. They may get some behavioural confirmation for being tied to a female partner, but by and large, they cannot produce income or status via their partner"* (LINDENBERG & FREY)

In this sense, the production factors for social well-being which are possible in a society can be expressed in what will be called the *social goal hierarchy*, while the particular production functions of a given actor – i.e., the selection of those goals from the social goal hierarchy which he makes use of in his life arrangement – will be referred to as the *personal goal hierarchy*

of this actor. In sociological terminology, this might be referred to as the *multiple roles* of an actor's (LINTON 1945, MERTON 1957).

The major problem of need theory, which was the reliable prediction of behaviour in specific situations from a given need configuration, is closer to its solution in a hierarchical goal model like LINDENBERG's because of two reasons: first, tradeoffs between first-order goals are explicitly allowed: these goals combine in a multiplicative manner[45] to the topmost goal *subjective well-being* – need theories, on the other hand, in general have no theoretical model for compensation between need dimensions. Second, a hierarchy is more flexible than a needs-based model in the sense that it gives guidance for systematically investigating the production factors which an actor has at his disposal for producing higher-order goal attainment. This way, the researcher is able to get step-by-step closer to the specific situation at hand and finally specify a (set of) likely situational goal(s) – see section **4.1** for the details.

Framing and the multifunctional opportunity structure of decision situations

Through a social production function hierarchy, any action that is possible in a concrete decision situation can be linked to subjective well-being by different paths through the goal hierarchy (multifunctionality). It can happen that preference for the options is path-dependent – e.g., considering *"choice of transportation mode for the trip to work"* as the decision problem, there may be distinct preference for choosing the car when one only considers the subjective well-being produced by the *comfort* while being transported. On the other hand, there may be an equally distinct preference *against* choosing the car when one only considers the subjective well-being produced by *behavioural confirmation* in a group of environmentalist colleagues at work. The overall impact of any action on subjective well-being is only assessed on the topmost level of the hierarchy, while the goals that qualify for being pursued in the situation are lowest in the hierarchy. It is the pursuit of these immediately applicable goals which framing theory addresses.

Framing and incompatibility of situational goals

As argued above, a by-product of pursuing one situational goal can be that goal attainment of other goals diminishes. As was mentioned in Section **2.2.1** already, the strongest benefit of goal setting is that it makes a universal, vaguely specified goal more specific and operational. Because this necessitates a concentration of attention on very particular information (namely, the information that is necessary for pursuing the goal), attention is

[45] The multiplicativity (expressed by proposing a Cobb-Douglas production function) indicates limited substitutability between the first-order goals: the lower goal attainment on one of the dimensions gets, the more goal attainment it needs on the other dimension to compensate for this lack. As a result, the most efficient way to improve overall subjective well-being is to try to attain the goal that is lacking, and not the others. MASLOW's need hierarchy this way can be re-interpreted as an artefact of the nature of production functions hierarchies.

withdrawn from information related to other goals – passively withdrawn because attention is commonly viewed as a limited capacity of individuals, and more attention here in general means less attention there – and actively withdrawn because information about other goals deludes the decision maker and may preclude him from ever reaching any immediate goal, (see Section **2.2.1**). Social production function theory gives a guideline for singling out situational goals that play a role in a given decision situation, but out of itself, it cannot account for these cognitive effects of focussed attention. According to framing theory, which postulates the focussing on one goal only, the supergoals are systematically forgotten during the pursuit of the subgoals. A look at a classical example for how focussing on a subgoal can damage supergoal attainment will illustrate this:

> **Ernie and Bert sharing licorice vines.** *Ernie comes home where Bert is awaiting him. He has brought with him a licorice vine and tells Bert that this vine shall be shared equally among them. Bert is glad at this prospect, and Ernie takes a pair of scissors with which he cuts the vine into two parts. However, he does not succeed in sharing equally: Bert's part is smaller than Ernie's. Despite Bert's reaction "that doesn't matter, you bought the licorice, after all", Ernie insists on equality of shares. He again takes the scissors and shortens his share - and quickly eats the cut-off part! However, again Ernie didn't cut accurately: he has cut off too much; his own share now is smaller than Bert's. He remedies this like before by cutting off a bit of the longer share, and eating it. This game continues, to Bert's growing amazement, until both shares are of minuscule length. Finally, Ernie pulls a second vine out of his bag, saying: "this is your share, Bert..."*

It is easy to see through problems of this low complexity, and recognize the goal switches that occur in the little scene. This may be different, however, when the two goals lie further apart in the goal hierarchy – e.g. first decide for a partnership but later cheat the partner. As long as the plan is kept in mind, it is easier to detect where exactly something went wrong. Taking the example of Ernie and Bert, it is clear what went wrong: the supergoal 'equal shares' is not attained by proceeding the way Ernie does. For solving the sub-problem "what to do with the cut-off part?", Ernie adopts the readily accessible goal 'eat licorice', which presumably is quite strong in the background as it already motivated his decision to buy licorice in the first place, but which, as a subgoal, is incompatible with the supergoal of sharing equally.

3.1.3 Conclusions for framing theory

The preceding sections illustrate the adequacy of representing an individual's motivations by means of goal hierarchies. Any concrete decision situation can be instrumentally linked to the decision maker's subjective well-being, yet this linkage, is not necessarily a unique one because the theory explicitly allows for different instrumentality chains between the

immediate decision situation and the topmost goal. It is here that different situational goals come into play. They correspond to different paths by which the same decision situation is linked to the actor's subjective well-being. As such, goal hierarchies, in the shape of social production function hierarchies, will be used as a reference theory about the nature and relationship among goals that can play a role in decision making – a prerequisite for starting to flesh out framing theory has been established.

While in principle, other models for classifying goals are possible (as illustrated by the large variety of needs models proposed), hierarchies have several advantages over needs models: their explicit inclusion of instrumentality relations allows them to swiftly model effects that naturally occur in decision making (TODA 1976, Section **2.2** above) as well as goal pursuit (LOCKE & LATHAM 1990, ibid.). Because there is a topmost goal that summarizes all motivation, a direct link can be laid between goal theory (and thus framing theory) and utility theory, facilitating a comparison on the theoretical side (see Section **4.4**). Of course, goal hierarchies cannot out of themselves account for situational variability of motivation – for this, additional theory is needed. For this aim, general theories about the situational influence on knowledge activation will be discussed in the following Section **3.2**, and these will be operationalized into situational influences on goal activation in Section **4.2**.

3.2 The representation of goals in memory

After having identified different situational goals as corresponding to different instrumentality paths between the decision situation and the actor's subjective well-being, the next question is: how does such a constellation translate into action? TODA's argument that attention necessarily must be focussed in order to pursue a goal (Section **2.2.1**) suggests a competition among goals for determining the actor's decision. What does this competition look like? As a natural second step towards making framing theory predictively powerful, now the explication of the situation-sensitive mechanisms that single out one goal which is pursued at the expense of all the others is on schedule.

With the aim of preparing a taxonomy of these situational effects (Section **4.2**), social-cognitive theories about situation-specific knowledge activation will be used as theoretical guideline. It will be argued that the set of possible perspectives which a decision maker may assume when confronting a decision situation is affected by the cognitive phenomenon of categorization (in this context also referred to as *anchoring*). By sorting an encountered decision situation into a category of supposedly similar ones, a 'pseudo-environment' (LIPPMANN 1922) is created, which may differ considerably from the real environment. The latter provides the raw material of sensory perceptions (stimuli), while category-specific knowledge (co-)determines which elements are selected from it, how they are valued and enriched to finally acquire category-specific meaning. In social cognition research, the notions

social schema and *social representation* are used to refer to such 'knowledge chunks'. In the following Section **3.2.1**, these notions are introduced. In Section **3.2.2**, they are re-examined in the light of decision making.

3.2.1 Social schemata and social representations

> *"Cognition is the most socially conditioned activity of man."*
>
> LUDWIK FLECK (1935)

In the 1970s, there was an outburst of research on how human memory is organized, in what shape knowledge about the world is stored, and how it is situationally activated when required. Presumably, this boom was inspired by the rise of computer technology, and the rising demand of the new discipline of artificial intelligence for such theories. What today is commonly recognized as 'cognitive science' then still was an unlikely conglomerate of computer science, cognitive psychology, and neurobiology. It is against this background that research on *social schemata* is to be understood. In their 1975 book *"Explorations in Cognition"*, Donald A. NORMAN and David E. RUMELHART give the following somewhat technical definition of its basic notion: *"we define a schema to be a framework that interrelates the different aspects of a body of knowledge. It is indexed by the features and functions of the knowledge that it includes. It can be examined, modified, and applied to new situations"* (p.406). Schemata thus are conceived as a universal way of representing knowledge, not particular to the social domain. Further, knowledge is organized in 'chunks' - any 'body of knowledge' has its own specific stimulus domain: *"the schema contains general knowledge about that domain, including specification of the relationships among its attributes, as well as specific examples or instances of the stimulus domain"* (TAYLOR & CROCKER 1981, p.91) - in the traditional interpretation, there is one specific example per schema which is called the *prototype* of the schema's stimulus domain. When a schema is active, it guides the individual's perception in a theory-driven manner: *"the schema provides hypotheses about incoming stimuli, which include plans for interpreting and gathering schema-related information"* (ibid). The practical value of organizing knowledge in schemata is that these *"organize complex information in a meaningful way... Schemas help us to make sense of the world, they lend structure to our perceptions and experience... (they) help guide a number of central cognitive processes such as perception, memory, inference and evaluation"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER 1995, p.57). The assumption of schema theory is that information is processed in a 'theory-driven' (rather than 'data-driven') manner: the schema which is 'tested' for the match drives the identification of the central elements of the incoming information, and if these do not refute the schema, the missing information is filled in from the schema's memorized knowledge about the category: *"a schema is matched against an incoming stimulus configuration, so that the relationship between the elements of the schema are compared to the incoming information. If the information is a good match to the schema, then the constitutive elements of the schema are imposed upon the information"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER, p.43). This corresponds to what BEACH proposed as the 'compatibility test' of his *image theory* (see Section **2.1.2**, p.39).

Categorization

The basic mechanism by which incoming information is interpreted is, according to schema theory, *categorization*: the sorting of a perceived set of stimuli into a category of supposedly similar ones. By referring to memorized knowledge about the category, the actor is relieved from the task of empirically finding out many detailed aspects about the object at hand. In that sense, categorizing is an effective mechanism to *"impose order on the complexity of the stimulus world"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER, p.34). If e.g. a hunter categorizes a further unknown prey as a bird, he will take into account his knowledge that birds can fly. It has primarily been Eleanor ROSCH (e.g. 1978) who advanced the systematical investigation of categorization mechanisms. She found that by categorizing natural objects, people stress within-category similarity and between-category dissimilarity. For doing so, they make use of cognitive reference points (prototypes). A feature which links up with the idea of instrumentality relations between goals (see Section **3.1** above) is the point that categories may be nested (chairs can be sub-categorized as kitchen chairs, garden chairs, office chairs, etc.), which results in different levels of abstraction of categorization. Further, categorization is performed automatically or with little conscious effort, thus leaving enough attention to perform other tasks. The details of ROSCH's general results will not be considered here. Instead, results about social knowledge activation will be reported that are of direct relevance to decision making, notably the social categorization of persons (keywords: role, social identity, personality), and of events (keyword: script) – a recent overview of this literature is given by MCGARTY (1999). According to schema theory, once a stimulus configuration (situation) is categorized, the corresponding category-specific knowledge is activated, and this activated knowledge (the schema) then is used for further evaluation and supplementing of the stimulus material – the schema guides the following steps of information processing.

Criticism

A major criticism directed at the straightforward application of the schema concept to the social domain has been that the social world is regarded as just another knowledge domain, not fundamentally different from other domains about which knowledge can be accumulated. In the words of DE ROSA (1992): *"social influence is only recognised as facilitating logical operations within problem-solving strategies available in own cultural context"* (p.126) - as such it reduces the social dimension to a passive role, and social psychology this way becomes *"a simple extension of general cognitivist psychology for the study of social stimuli"* (UGAZIO 1988, p.44, cf. DE ROSA). *Social representations theory* was developed amidst such *"calls for a more social social psychology"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER, p.134) as a response to this criticism[46] and as an alternative to social schema theory. It is largely connected to the name and work of Serge MOSCOVICI, who also coined the name of the discipline. In contrast to schema research, it interprets the social

[46] This discussion about the 'underdeveloped status' of the *social* component in the disciplines *social cognition* as well as *social psychology* in general is still going on – for the latter, see FLICK (1998), for the former look at NYE & BROWER (1996).

world as a force actively engaged in the construction of cognitive processes. According to SEMIN (1989), *"the essential difference between the two approaches derives from the fact that in the case of the [social schema] approach the problem is with 'internal' mechanisms while in the case of social representations the emphasis is on factors which affect the way in which we order our environment"* (p.247, quotation from DE ROSA 1992). *"It is not the nature of the object which differentiates the social from the non-social but the relationship that is established with it. There are sacred cats and sacred houses while there are human beings regarded as something less than objects, for example by their doctors."* (MOSCOVICI 1986, p.36, quotation from DE ROSA).

There is an ongoing debate between researchers in both traditions about the appropriateness of each other's theoretical assumptions and empirical research methods, yet here only two aspects shall be stressed which are of particular importance to the topic of framing. First, the two theories both acknowledge the role which categorization mechanisms play for interpreting the environment (in social representations theory, categorization is called *anchoring*). Empirical research, however, has a much stronger tradition for social schemata than for social representations, which is the reason why in Section **3.2.2**, primarily results from this stream of research are referred to when re-introducing decision problems. The second point relates to the social context: social schema theory remains largely silent about the origin and superordinate purpose of schemata. *"Apart from research on prototypes and highly consensual and unambiguous events and role schemas, little theoretical work has been carried out to ascertain ... how they may arise from social interaction and communication"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER, p.176). In contrast, social representations theory stresses this interactive nature of social cognition: *"what enables us to call a representation 'social' is not so much their individual or group supports as the fact that they are elaborated during processes of exchange and interaction"* (MOSCOVICI 1989[47], p.82). As such, the latter is the broader and more ambitious theory when it comes to the explanation of social phenomena. Because ultimately, the theory of individual action proposed in this book shall be applicable to sociological research questions (see introduction), this aspect of social representations theory shall here briefly be elaborated.

How social categories enter the personal menu of categories

Without conventions and codes of conduct, the coordination of activities would be extremely difficult (e.g., LEWIS 1969), and a social order can to a large part be characterized by its conventions and codes of conduct (e.g., GIDDENS 1984). Such rules,

> *"Here, then, is a category of facts which present very special characteristics: they consist of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him. Consequently, since they consist of representations and actions, they cannot be confused with organic phenomena, nor with psychical phenomena, which have no existence save in and through the individual consciousness. Thus they constitute a new species and to them must be exclusively assigned the term social."*
>
> EMILE DURKHEIM (1895)

[47] Translation by DE ROSA. MOSCOVICI attributes this quote to CODOL, without revealing the exact source.

however, necessitate at least a shared interpretation of the 'topic' of any particular social interaction. From the viewpoint of the functioning of a society, inter-individually shared classification systems thus are a necessary prerequisite for social order. DURKHEIM (1912) stresses this when asserting that *"society could not abandon the categories to the free choice of the individual without abandoning itself... There is a minimum of logical conformity beyond which it cannot go"* (p.29). This dependability of individuals necessary for social life links up with the individuals' dependence on social life, e.g. for the production of higher-order goods such as security or status. In providing or withholding these goods, a society has means to reward or punish individual behaviour, thereby shaping its stable forms – an idea usually referred to as *socialization*. The "Collins Dictionary of Sociology" gives the following 'modern' definition of this cornerstone of sociology:

> **socialization**, n. **1.** (also called enculturation) the process in which the culture of a society is transmitted to children; the modification from infancy of an individual's behaviour to conform with the demands of social life (see acculturation). In this sense, socialization is a functional prerequisite for any society, essential to any social life, as well as to the cultural and social reproduction of both general and particular social forms. As emphasized by PARSONS & BALES (1955), socialization, undertaken in the family and elsewhere, involves both integration into society (roles, institutions, etc.) and the differentiation of one individual from another. (...)

According to this definition, the process of socialization roughly corresponds to (or at least: comprises) the acquisition of social knowledge (schemata, representations). This boundary region between sociology and social psychology seems to be badly researched in the two streams of social cognition research treated earlier, as pointed out by AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER (1995): *"there is an obvious need for the introduction of a developmental perspective, in both social schema and social representations research, to delineate more clearly the processes of acquisition and the development of social knowledge"* (p.177). The fact that social schema theory tells little about the origin of social categories may be explained by its focus on the information processing component of social cognition. Due to the interactive nature of social representations, they are better suited for being treated in a dynamic or developmental perspective. The introduction of such a dynamic viewpoint in social representations theory is a current issue, as illustrated by an overview article by DE ROSA (1992). Below in Section **3.3**, it will be used to motivate a particularly important aspect of human behaviour, namely the decay of normative behaviour over time.

Personal categories as social facts

To add weight to LINDENBERG & FREY's (1993) argument about the factual nature of personal goals (see p.66 above), a side remark about the same factual nature of personal categories may be useful. In the words of DURKHEIM's, *"[t]he necessity with which the categories are imposed on us is not the effect of simple habits whose yoke we can easily throw off with a little effort; nor*

is it a physical or metaphysical necessity, since the categories change in different places and times; it is a special sort of moral necessity which is to the intellectual life what moral obligation is to the will" (DURKHEIM 1912). In the terminology of social representations theory, the adoption of socially prescribed categories is called *objectification*, or the 'social construction of the world' (BERGER & LUCKMANN 1966). MOSCOVICI introduces his notion as follows: *"to objectify is to discover the iconic quality of an imprecise idea or being, to reproduce a concept as an image."* (1984, p.38) - eventually *"the image is wholly assimilated and what is perceived replaces what is conceived ... Thus by a sort of logical imperative, images become elements of reality rather than elements of thought"* (p.40).

3.2.2 Social knowledge and decision situations

There are few reasons to assume that the personal interpretation of *decision* situations deviates crucially from that of other situations. The main (perhaps only) difference is the naturally-purposive character of decision situations as opposed to merely passively encountered situations. However, the issue of situational purpose already was treated in Section **3.1** by modelling it in terms of personal motivation, organized in goal hierarchies. Next to this, also non-purposive elements can be expected to play a role in the personal interpretation of situations. After seeing that 'raw perceptions' are processed in a schematic manner, it is not difficult to accept that categorization mechanisms will also play a role in decision making, and can potentially override the motivational aspects.

How categorization affects decision making

In the previous chapter, several elements which make up a decision were identified – recall: there is a decision maker who is faced with multiple options, selecting one of these is supposed to be a meaningful, purposive act and based on deliberation of advantages and disadvantages associated with the options. The first aim here is to show the potential roles which social knowledge can play for each of these central elements. Then it will be investigated how these mechanisms fit together in a consistent manner.

The decision maker has to take a position from which he faces the decision problem. When an employee is offered a bribe in return for some insider information, does he then act as the representative of his employer, or does he act as a clever guy who knows to get his gain anywhere? In experimental studies, a *"salience of social group membership over more individualized person schemas when processing information"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER, p.40) has been observed.

Self-categorization theory (TURNER & OAKES 1989) addresses the question which situational circumstances favour which type of categorization. The general tendency of these findings is that the less a self-categorization has to do with person-specific characteristics, the more readily it is applied. Ascribed roles (like gender, ethnicity or age) are more salient than

achieved roles (e.g. job, education), and both types of roles are more salient than personality characteristics (like neuroticism or extraversion) – a finding which emphasizes the social nature of self-categorization by the actor.

Options and their advantages and disadvantages: Options can be elements of quite arbitrary sets. If they are natural objects, classification according to natural object categories is possible (ROSCH 1978) – e.g. if there is a choice between consumer goods. If they are persons, then just as in the case of the self-classification of the decision maker, several person categories could be applied.

However, because any singular option usually can be sorted into a multitude of categories (*'the multiple category problem'*, FAZIO 1998), there is a basic ambiguity about how the whole set of options will be categorized. Only those categories which are possible candidates for each singular option can be applied to this whole set of options. This means that by eliminating options from the set, one can get a larger number of potential categories for the reduced set than there were for the original set. Further, the number of category candidates is reduced by the nature of decision making. Decision making, as understood in this book, is based on deliberation about the options' advantages and disadvantages. However, raw characteristics of options (and their consequences) can become advantages and disadvantages only when there is a way to evaluate them, otherwise they remain raw data. A (consistent) way of evaluating options' characteristics thus is a further criterion which category candidates have to pass: options have to serve a *common purpose*, otherwise there cannot be relative advantages or disadvantages. An imaginary choice between an apple, a bus driver, and helping a friend paint his living room, will primarily be difficult because of the diverging purposes of the three options. Finally, it should be kept in mind that the subjective option set is, at least partly, constructed by the decision maker. These issues will be treated in some detail in Chapter **4**.

The purposeful act: When not natural or social objects but behaviour patterns (events) are categorized, one speaks of *event schemata* or *scripts*. The notion was introduced by SCHANK & ABELSON (1977) who motivate their construct with the assumption of an *episodic memory* (*"organized around propositions linked together by their occurrence in the same event or time span"* - p.18) as contrasted to memory organized around *semantic categories*:

> *"Some episodes are reminiscent of others. As an economy measure in the storage of episodes, when enough of them are alike they are remembered in terms of a standardized generalized episode which we will call a script. Thus, rather than the details of what happened in a restaurant for each visit to a restaurant, memory simply lists a pointer (link) to what we call the restaurant script and stores the items in this particular episode that were significantly different from the standard script as the only items specifically in the description of that episode"* (ibid.)

As AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER (1995) put it, *"event schemas provide the basis for anticipating the future, setting goals and making plans. They enable the individual to set strategies to achieve such goals, by specifying the appropriate behavioural consequences through which the individual must move to attain the desired state"* (p.41). Apart from being 'stereotyped' sequences of events, SCHANK & ABELSON take the *intentions* and *goals* of the people pertaining to the event as crucial elements of the script. An illustration of theirs is the event "Sue goes to the library", which does not only tell about the event but also relates it to knowledge about the purpose of libraries. Would, in addition, something more be known about Sue, e.g. her occupation (student, or library assistant), much more could be inferred about her motivation to go there, and more precise anticipations of what exactly she will do there could be formed. *"[G]oal-oriented knowledge forms the background from which we infer and understand behaviour"* (AUGOUSTINOS & WALKER, p.42). For the particular case of decision making, this implies that a decision is a meaningful act as soon as it can be interpreted as an instance of goal pursuit. LOCKE & LATHAM (1990) therefore call the goal which is imputed this way a 'first-order' or 'immediate' explanation of human action.

SCHANK&ABELSON distinguish three types of scripts. A 'situational script' they characterize as social in nature, in the sense that the roles which its participants play are acknowledged by all participants: *"there is great social economy when [all] parties know the script because [no] party need invest effort deciding what the actions of the other mean and how appropriately to respond. Indeed, it is characteristic of institutionalized public situations with defined goals ... that the social interactions be stylized. This is one reason why scripts are so common, and so helpful in understanding"* (p.61). In addition to these, there also are 'personal scripts' which *"do not behave in the stylized fashion of situational scripts. All the participants in personal scripts are not necessarily aware of their participation... The personal script exists solely in the mind of its main actor. It consists of a sequence of possible actions that will lead to a desired goal"* (p.62). Personal scripts thus correspond to 'secret agendas' of actors. As the third type of scripts, they mention *instrumental scripts* which remind of 'operating instructions' of a non-social type. They are transparently goal-oriented and involve one actor only. In the framework of this book, script theory's focus on procedural steps is too descriptive-specific (like process tracing research earlier) for being of high value to framing theory. The general idea of situational scripts as manifestations of goal-oriented knowledge, however, is exactly what is central to framing theory. In the remainder of this section, scripts in this general sense will be referred to as a *goal schemata*.

Deliberation: Schema theory stresses that the processing of schemata is an automatic process, which seemingly stands in contradiction to the assertion that decision making is a deliberate process.

However, as becomes clear when looking at the classical restaurant script, schemata do leave room for deliberation at certain fixed points in the schema processing. A schema applicable to decision situations must have these built-in points of deliberation. In the model developed in Chapter **4**, it will be argued that schema *activation* indeed is an automatic component of

decision making, while the *processing* of decision-related schemata – in the sense of goal pursuit – is a controlled activity.

3.2.3 Conclusions for framing theory

When now linking the functions that goals can have in decision making (as identified them in Chapter **2**) with the schematic effects which can occur in decision making as just listed, the following general picture of decision making emerges: the embedding of the decision situation into a goal schema defines the meaning of the decision situation, and the meaning of the elements of the decision situation – SCHANK & ABELSON (1977): *"a script is made up of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots"* (p.41). The important 'slots' in the case of decision situations are the decision maker and the options. For the decision maker (and other potentially involved actors) the 'slot requirements' correspond to particular roles: *"when a script is called for use... the actors in the story assume the roles within the instantiated script"* (ibid). The script-role, in turn, again reflects the goal which the decision maker pursues. For the options, the 'slot requirements' are that they constitute a set which enables the pursuit of this goal: the perceived consequences of choice options have to enable the decision maker to assess the expected goal attainment level associated with each option.

This way, a top-down motivational mechanism is sketched of categorizing the act of decision making, the decision maker, and the option set simultaneously and in a consistent way. It necessitates a unique embedding of the decision situation in a goal schema. This is, however – particularly in the tradition of experimental decision theory – frequently not the case, and the decision maker first has to adopt one such goal schema from a set of several latently active ones. Therefore often, and particularly in situations addressed by framing theory, a decision situation is a situation of *goal schema uncertainty*. In situations of uncertainty, decision makers are especially responsive to information pieces which alleviate their uncertainty and make for a clear-cut interpretation in terms of a well-defined goal schema. Such information pieces (cues) exert a bottom-up effect on schema selection, they trigger those schemata in which they appear in a prominent position. The BLESS ET AL. (1997) version of the *Asian disease problem* mentioned above (with the label-cues 'medical' vs. 'statistical') nicely illustrates this effect (see Section **2.3.2**, p.57). If such overt cues are absent (or operating parallel to them), properties of the decision maker and properties of the option set can act as triggers. This opens up the possibility for person categories or option categories to determine the final (i.e. operational) meaning of the decision situation. If left without cue, the decision maker may e.g. rely on his self-concept (e.g., 'I am a loyal person'), or on suggestions from the stimulus set (e.g., 'this is a unique opportunity to get rich'). In framing theory, all these effects are interpreted as relating to goal schemata directly, and accordingly, the (intervening) notions of self-schemata, option categorization, or scripts (in the narrow sense of the word) will not be used any more, but replaced by the summary notion of goal activation.

A final comment about this research stream relates to the outspoken focus of framing theory on situations where goal schema ambiguity occurs. Already SCHANK & ABELSON diagnosed that this situation is a *"case of especial interest to psychologists, [which] arises when ... distinct causal chains compete as explanations for the outcome of an ambiguous situation"* (p.33). The cognitive details of the triggering mechanisms, including this element of competition among goal schemata, will be treated in the following Chapter **4**. Along with this elaboration, the framing model gets its final shape.

3.3 The operant shape of goals

To recall a difference that was made in Section **3.1.2**, the *personal* goal hierarchies of individual actors, as they reflect these actors' production means to attain subjective well-being, can be integrated into a *social* goal hierarchy that contains all the production means for subjective well-being that are possible in a given group of actors. In this sense, a whole society can be charted in terms of the production means it provides to its members. However, even the personal goal hierarchy of an actor, when taken as a whole, still is a very large collection of goals and instrumentality relations. To chart an individual's motivations in such a personal goal hierarchy is a very complex endeavour, and while the framework of social production function theory seems well-suited for tackling the problem (VAN BRUGGEN 2001), for the purpose of analysing the individual's decision behaviour, it may not be necessary on the outset. Keeping in mind that in social analysis, the model for individual action is but one out of three components of the explanatory framework[48] – the whole hierarchy surely is too large a model to be applied directly. It thus is necessary to reduce the complexity of the goal hierarchy, in a manner that keeps its decision-relevant properties intact. In Section **4.1**, I will sketch a way that allows for bypassing the assessment of full personal goal hierarchies – the idea is to refer to the social goal hierarchy instead, and look at its possible interactions with the decision situation at hand. A method of reducing the effort of assessing the potentially pursuable personal goals in a given decision situation will be prepared now.

3.3.1 LINDENBERG's master frames

In order to get a systematic grip on the problem of reducing the social goal hierarchy as a whole to a tractable, simple sub-hierarchy that still captures the crucial elements of the larger hierarchy, LINDENBERG's proposition of *master frames* (e.g., 2001) is fruitful. In addition to the taxonomy of goals by their substantive content (which the goal hierarchy provides), the

[48] The others being the 'bridge assumptions' which specify influence of the social system on the actor and aggregation mechanisms by which individual action combines into macro-level properties of the social system.

sorting of goals into master frames provides a taxonomy for the *shape* or *mode* of goal pursuit. In this context, the three models of man that were introduced on the first pages of this book will enter the scene again, as will be seen shortly.

In Chapter **1** (p.12) it was mentioned that *finding the point of view of the actor* is another way of picturing the framing of a decision situation. This perspective shifts attention to the way in which the actor perceives his situation and pursues his goal, to phenomenological modes of experience and action. Because a general phenomenological approach is not very conducive to powerful theory formation, I prefer to use the notion of *morphological types* of goals instead. Irrespective of substantive content or predicted action, there are goals which are *similar*. E.g., when a child promises to a friend not to report some misbehaviour to the grown-ups, the motivation not to snitch is of the same, obligatory type as the motivation to report the misbehaviour to the grown-ups when they inquire about it. Likewise, the motivation to be first in a sports competition is similar to the motivation to get the best bargain when buying a certain product. The notion of morphological similarity of two goals shall captures a common element inherent in phenomenological similarity (the way an actor feels about his goal), evolutionary similarity (the way a goal historically established itself in the social goal hierarchy), and structural similarity (the type of instrumentality relation of the goal in the goal hierarchy). The taxonomy proposed now is a slight adaption of LINDENBERG's (2001) model[49] of *"master frames"*. Three modes of goal pursuit are proposed: the *hedonic* mode, the *gain* mode, and the *normative* mode.

Hedonic framing and the consummatory quality of actions

Given a goal hierarchy, the most efficient way of improving subjective well-being (the topmost goal) is to improve it directly, i.e., to improve it by taking an action, with no intermediate events or evaluations necessary for improving subjective well-being. According to the model of social production function theory, no 'fully direct' way of improving subjective well-being will be possible because all actions' effects are channelled through the five first-order goals, or even through goals on a much lower level on the hierarchy. However, the idea of immediacy (or remoteness) between action and improvement in well-being still makes sense to consider: if an action gives immediate affection (say, a chat with a friend), it has higher hedonic quality than an action that gives remote affection (say, buy a bunch of flowers for a friend that you will only meet later). This way, the hierarchical distance from the topmost goal (as e.g. indicated in the number of intermediate goals necessary for reaching the topmost goal) indicates the degree of hedonism inherent in an action. The most strongly hedonic actions are those that directly relate to the five first-order goals (see p.66f). When an action is chosen because of its hedonic quality, this will be called hedonic goal

[49] In LINDENBERG's (2001) derivation of the three master frames (which will also be derived here, shortly), only the phenomenological aspect seems to be covered.

pursuit, or action in a hedonic frame. In SCHIMANK's (2000) typology of actor models, (purely) hedonic action is explained best by referring to theories about *emotional man*.

The operant shape of hedonic goals is *"to feel better."* Immediate experiences of increasing subjective well-being are the criteria for taking an action. While this type of framing surely is around in the social goal hierarchy of modern societies as well (leisure time activities, meditation), they can best be imagined as the type of goal that is pursued in early childhood, when not being aware of goals at all. However, hedonic goal pursuit is not always possible: in its consummatory character, hedonic goal-attainment is prone to be short-lasting, and its effects on subjective well-being are likely to be fickle. The focus on immediate impact of actions on subjective well-being is complemented by longer periods of deprivation, and naturally, a tendency to devote some effort to sustained goal attainment will show to have its benefits by increasing average subjective well-being in the medium and long term. Such considerations are inherently non-immediate, non-hedonic.

Gain framing and the resource-improving quality of actions

Hedonic action often can be viewed as resource consumption. Eating, exercising, savouring others' appreciation or love, all are not very stable over time. In order to make sure that tomorrow, there still will be opportunities for hedonic action, precautionary measures have to be taken: stock food, keep the body healthy, care for social relations – the maintenance and improvement of resources, be these material or social resources. Resources allow to bridge phases of hardship when hedonic goal pursuit delivers little satisfaction. Because this way, access to such resources structurally improves subjective well-being, the *provision* of resources becomes an alternative means to produce subjective well-being on the medium term. However, this provision of resources comes at the cost of not pursuing hedonic goals in times when this would very well be possible. The resource-improving quality of an action is distinctly non-hedonic and at times even anti-hedonic – e.g., the conservation of food is naturally opposed to eating it up immediately. When an actor is producing resources, this will be referred to as pursuit of a *gain goal*. By this reasoning, resources are always instrumental[50] to the attainment of more hedonic goals. The operant shape of gain goals is *"to get more"*, and the actor model in SCHIMANK's (2000) typology that corresponds to the pursuit of (pure) gain goals is *homo economicus*.

Normative framing and the functional interdependence of actors

Social groups have several functions in the lives of their individual members. In their hedonic aspect, they are the immediate source of social well-being in terms of behavioural confirmation, status, and affection. Under the guise of social capital, they assume a gain

[50] Some first-order goals (especially *status*) are both hedonic (i.e., they contribute directly to subjective well-being) and instrumental (i.e., they can be used as a resource to achieve hedonic goals).

aspect. Yet the members of a social group often also are functionally interdependent: some resources can exclusively be produced by a group, and the group as a whole needs to ensure the production of this type of resources. It is under this condition that *normative goals* play a role in human behaviour. They always are instrumental to group-related resource production (even if these resources are as immaterial as 'the law' or 'national unity'), and the pursuit of a normative goal is a synonym for compliant behaviour, i.e., behaviour that furthers the group's regular functioning as a resource production team. The 'normative solution' to the production of the group-related resource is to condition (socialize) the group members to function as production units of the group goal. What happens during socialization is essentially hedonic punishment of incorrect (i.e., counterproductive) behaviour, the major means of sanctioning being negative behavioural confirmation (*"our social interaction consists very much in telling one another what right thinking is and passing blame on wrong thinking"* – DOUGLAS 1986, p.91). After norm compliance is firmly established as a behavioural guideline in the individual's goal hierarchy, the operant shape of such a normative goal is a personal desire *"to behave correctly."* As can be guessed by now, the actor model in SCHIMANK's (2000) typology that corresponds to exclusively this type of action is *homo sociologicus*.

Because sanctions are part of the process of *acquiring* a normative goal, they also are part of the memorized goal schema. This way, the presence of adequate sanctions can exert a positive influence on pursuing this goal (instead of a different one), even after the socialization period is over. But neither the 'hedonic aspect' of not being punished, nor the 'gain aspect' of insight into the necessity of cooperation for producing a collective good stand central in the *pursuit* of normative goals – it is only the learned, conditioned behaviour that plays a role here, the correctness of the action. An actor who acts normatively (or, synonymously: morally) does so because he feels obliged to do so, because this is the appropriate way to behave. There is a natural conflict between normative behaviour and other types of behaviour because under the conditions where normative behaviour arises (production of collective goods), the actor's other goals naturally are opposed to cooperation (otherwise, no socialization would be necessary, and no normative goal would have to be established in the first place). However, an unresolved puzzle about the status of normative behaviour in the real world is that – in the presence of a fully functioning sanctioning system – it is difficult to disentangle normative behaviour (compliance because this is the correct thing to do) from gain behaviour (compliance because non-compliance is costly on the long run) and hedonic behaviour (compliance because this averts punishment). In Chapter **6**, this issue will be discussed to some detail in the context of an experimental study.

The relative strength of the three master frames

Despite the natural incompatibility of the three master frames, the corresponding three qualities of behaviour are not mutually exclusive: the same action can at the same time have hedonic aspects, gain aspects, and normative aspects. However, the perspective on the action is fundamentally different, and the relationship of the action to the first-order goals is

fundamentally different under the four frames. Which of these frames will ceteris paribus be strongest depends, in the hierarchical model introduced in Section **3.1** above, on the motivational component – i.e., on the strength of the corresponding link between the action and the expected improvement of subjective well-being. In general, paths that link action with subjective well-being by including a component of resource improvement will be longer than paths that immediately (or quasi-immediately) link the two. Therefore, individuals are naturally stronger inclined to pursue hedonic goals than gain goals. In the same sense, the normative goals – because instrumental to resource generation, which in turn is instrumental to fist-order goal attainment – are accompanied with a lower natural inclination to be pursued than the gain and hedonic goals[51]. Summing up, the relative *a priori* strength of the three master frames can be depicted as in Diagram **3.1**.

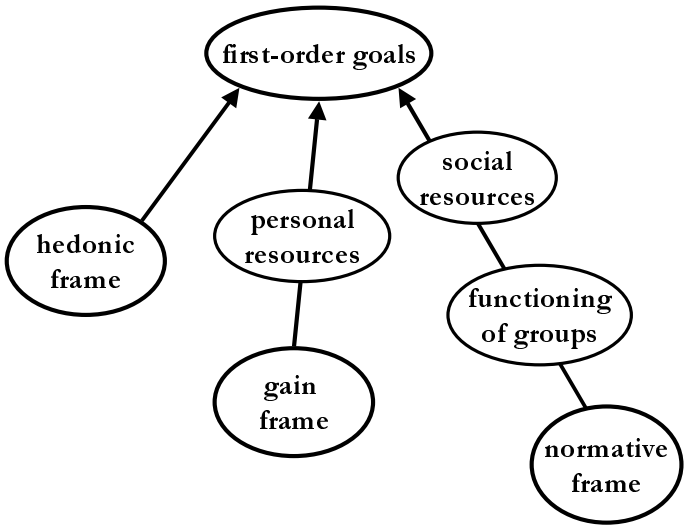

Diagram 3.1: The relative strength of the three master frames.

3.3.2 Conclusions for framing theory

In their role of representing recurring patterns of instrumental relationships between goals and subjective well-being, master frames approximate the *motivational* component of goal activation, i.e., that component of a goal's situational prominence that results from the functional relationship to the topmost goal subjective well-being. According to utility theory,

[51] One could argue that unless the group establishes property rights, even the production of individual resources is precarious (robbery). However, this does not mean that normative goals are naturally stronger than gain goals, or even a prerequisite for the existence of these – just that the presence or absence of normative rules stabilizes or undermines the prominence of the gain goals. This is likely to happen in the same manner as the 'weak solidarity' mechanism described in Section **1.2**.

only this motivational component[52] should play a role in goal activation, and not the components of situational matching of goal schemata[53]. This way, the *a priori* strength of the master frames can (somewhat ironically) be viewed as a remnant of utility theory within the framing model because, by definition, it does not change across situations.

For the construction of a framing model of a given decision situation, the master frames have a similar function as the five first-order goals of social production function theory: they constitute a guide for scanning the actor's motivational makeup, with the aim of identifying goals that are applicable to the decision situation. While the approach of social production function theory suggests to scan the whole motivational hierarchy of an actor (or a society), the addition of master frames reduces this endeavour to a guided search of goals according to a *'first-order goals'*×*'master frames'* setup. This is a much better delineated task than taking a whole inventory of goals.

52 In a slightly different context, the decision literature speaks of *consequential reasons* in decision making, i.e., reasons that are related to ultimate payoffs.

53 These always include *non-consequential* reasons for decision making e.g. the presence or absence of cues.